MR. ALAN MOORE & MR. KEVIN O'NEILL PRESENT
AMERICA'S BEST COMICS
The LEAGUE of EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN
AMERICA'S BEST COMICS
Volume Two
Issue Four
Feb.

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SUNDAY, AUGUST 7TH, 1898.
AH...
LOOK TO IT, MY DEAR. THERE'S SEATS HERE.
BARNES
BUT IT'S SO FULL OF PEOPLE! REALLY, MUST WE PACK UP AND RUN LIKE THIS?
YOU SIT THERE, CHILD.
IDGE
DEAREST, IT'S ONLY TEMPORARY, BECAUSE OF THE METEORITES. WE'LL BE HOME SOON, YOU'LL SEE.
OH, NOW IT'S HARDLY MOVING. ALL THESE PEOPLE, I EXPECT.
OH, IT'S ALL TOO BAD. I'D HAD THOSE LOVELY NEW CURTAINS DE-LIVERED...
THEY'LL STILL BE SAFE WHEN WE GET BACK, OLD THING. NOW, CHIN UP, eh?
ISTIAN
BUT REALLY! THOSE ANNOUNCEMENTS, SAYING EVERYONE SOUTH OF THE RIVER SHOULD EVACUATE. I'VE NEVER KNOWN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
FATHER...
JUST A MOMENT, LAD. YOUR MOTHER AND I ARE TALKING.
DARLING, YOU MUSTN'T LET THINGS LIKE THIS UPSET YOU...
ISTIAN
I KNOW. IT'S JUST THAT OUR WHOLE LIVES WERE IN THAT HOUSE. WHEN I THINK...
FATHER, LOOK! LOOK AT IT!
GOOD GOD.
WHAT ON EARTH IS...

4: All Creatures
Great and Small

;CUHUHH;
OH. OH...
MOTHER! FATHER...
OH, NO. OH, PLEASE.
PLEASE, I DON'T WANT TO...
?
WH...?

AAAAA!
AAAAA! OH, LORD!
OH, LORD, SAVE ME...
GOD BLAST IT! THE SON OF A WHORE IS BOILING THE RIVER EVERYWHERE IT FALLS!
LEAVE IT TO ME, MR. MATE...
GRAB THE LAD, JACK, AFORE THE STEAM COOKS 'IM!
AAA! OH GOD, PLEASE...

NO! WHO ARE YOU?
PLEASE, MY MOTHER AND FATHER...
THEY'RE DEAD, LAD.
YOU HAVE TO BE A MAN NOW.
NO!
MOTHER...
THERE.
EASY AS YOU GO, LAD. COME ON NOW. IT'S ALL RIGHT.
IT'S ALL RIGHT.

IT'S THE ONE WE SURFACED BENEATH, CAPTAIN.
WHAT'S HE BLUBBERING FOR? I'LL GIVE HIM SOMETHING TO CRY ABOUT.
HYDE, HE'S ONLY A CHILD.

I KNOW WHAT CHILDREN LOOK LIKE, NEMO. I'VE OFTEN SCRAPED THEM OFF MY BOOTS.
THAT'S ENOUGH.
FIND THE BOY DRY CLOTHES, MR. MATE.

AND GIVE HIM SOME BROTH. PUT HIM ASHORE WHEN WE DOCK AT WAPPING.
AYE AYE, CAPTAIN.
COME ON, BOY. LET'S GET YOU SHIPSHAPE.

HURNH. CHILDREN. IT'S THE WAY THEY LOOK AT YOU I CAN'T STAND.
YOU KNOW, NEMO, THAT WASN'T A BAD SHOT FOR A WOG.

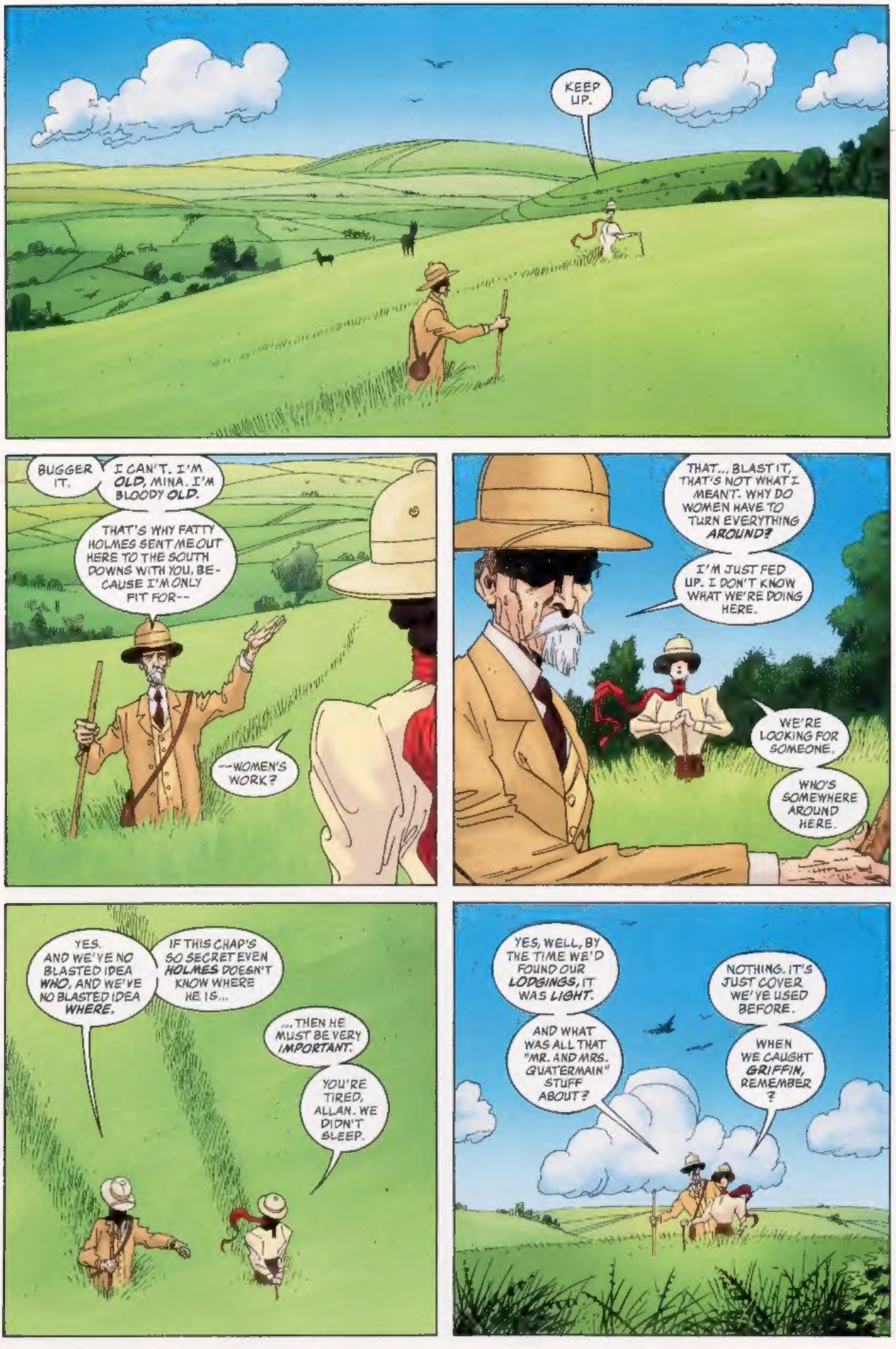
THANK YOU.
IT'S A PITY I COULDN'T NAVIGATE THE LOCKS TO SHEPPERTON, BUT I HEAR ARTILLERY HAVE DOWNED ONE INVADER THERE BY THEMSELVES.

ACCORDING TO MY COURIER, A SECOND TRI-POD RETRIEVED ITS COMRADE'S REMAINS...
THAT'S VERY TOUCHING.
THEY'RE AS WEAK AND SENTIMENTAL AS PEOPLE, THEN?

NO. THEY JUST DON'T WANT US STUDYING THEIR ENGINEERING.
BRING THAT WRECKAGE ABOARD, BROAD ARROW JACK.
USE THE TENTACLES.
RIGHT YOU ARE, SIR.

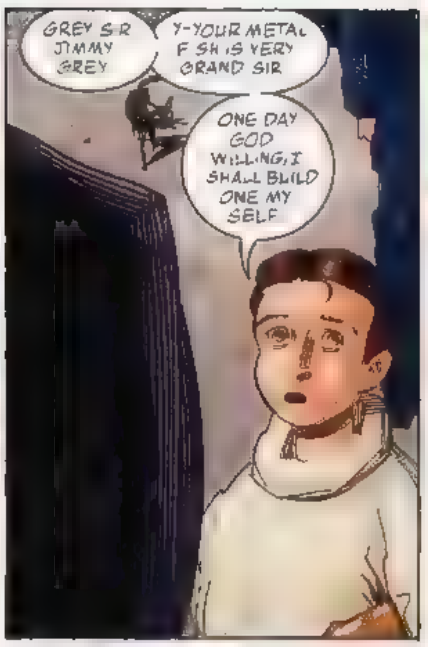
HURRH. WELL, HURRY UP. I WANT TO KILL MORE SLUGS.
OTHERWISE I MIGHT AS WELL BE OFF SOMEWHERE TAKING IT EASY, LIKE QUATERMAIN.

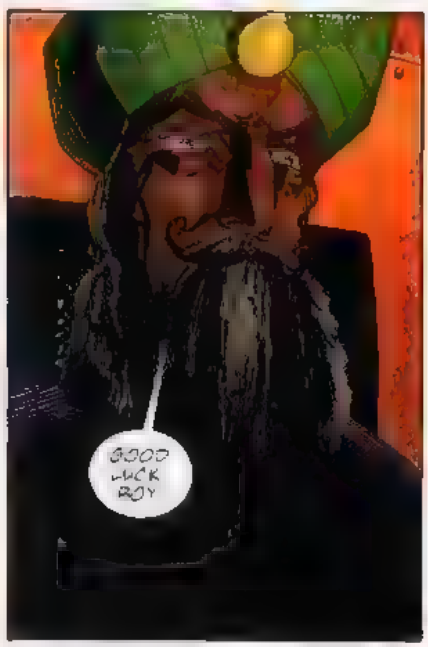
PATIENCE. THERE WILL BE ENOUGH KILLING SOON.
AS FOR QUATERMAIN, HE IS TRAVELLING WITH MISS MURRAY.
I DOUBT VERY MUCH THAT ANYTHING IS EASY.


KEEP UP.
BUGGER IT.
I CAN'T. I'M OLD, MINA. I'M BLOODY OLD.
THAT'S WHY FATTY HOLMES SENT ME OUT HERE TO THE SOUTH DOWNS WITH YOU, BECAUSE I'M ONLY FIT FOR--
--WOMEN'S WORK?
THAT... BLAST IT, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT. WHY DO WOMEN HAVE TO TURN EVERYTHING AROUND?
I'M JUST FED UP. I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE.
WE'RE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE.
WHO'S SOMEWHERE AROUND HERE.
YES. AND WE'VE NO BLASTED IDEA WHO, AND WE'VE NO BLASTED IDEA WHERE.
IF THIS CHAP'S SO SECRET EVEN HOLMES DOESN'T KNOW WHERE HE IS...
...THEN HE MUST BE VERY IMPORTANT.
YOU'RE TIRED, ALLAN. WE DIDN'T SLEEP.
YES, WELL, BY THE TIME WE'D FOUND OUR LODGINGS, IT WAS LIGHT.
AND WHAT WAS ALL THAT "MR. AND MRS. QUATERMAIN" STUFF ABOUT?
NOTHING. IT'S JUST COVER WE'VE USED BEFORE.
WHEN WE CAUGHT GRIFFIN, REMEMBER?

Hmmph. YES. I REMEMBER. GRIFFIN.
THE WAY HE TREATED YOU. I WISH THE BLIGHTER WERE HERE NOW.
DON'T SAY THAT, ALLAN.
HE MIGHT BE.
OH. YES. YES, I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT.
FINE TIME TO BRING IT UP, THOUGH, WITH THESE DARK WOODS LOOMING.
THEY'RE ALL WE HAVE. M. SAID OUR MYSTERY MAN MAINTAINED A MOBILE BASE IN THE FOREST, SO THAT NO ONE KNEW WHERE HE WAS.
JOLLY THOUGHTFUL OF HIM.
MINA, DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW BIG THESE BLOODY WOODS ARE?
NO. I ONLY KNOW THAT WE HAVE TO FIND THIS PERSON AND THAT COMPLAINING WON'T MAKE IT ANY EASIER.
WHY DON'T YOU TRY TO ENJOY YOURSELF?
Huh. YES, I SUPPOSE I SHOULD, AT LEAST UNTIL THE SPACEMEN COME AND FRY US BOTH.
OH, DO BE QUIET. IT'S A LOVELY SUMMER'S DAY AND THE BIRDS ARE SINGING.
BEAUTIFUL NATURE, AND ALL SO GREEN...
OH, DON'T YOU BE FOOLED. IT'S RED.
RED IN TOOTH AND CLAW.

WELL, BOY, HERE IS WHERE WE PUT YOU OFF. THE CONSTABLES WILL SEE YOU'RE ENTRUSTED WITH RELATIVES
WHAT IS YOUR NAME LAD?


GREY SIR JIMMY GREY
Y-YOUR METAL F SHIS VERY GRAND SIR
ONE DAY GOD WILLING, I SHALL BUILD ONE MY SELF


GOOD LUCK BOY

HUNH
CAB N BOY SAFELY ASHORE, IS HE?
PERHAPS WE CAN GET ON WITH OUR WORK

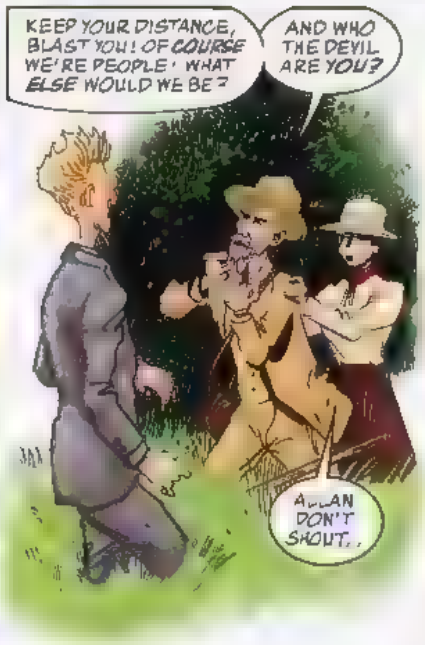
PROTECTING THE INNOCENT IS OUR WORK, CREATURE
NO.
KILLING MARS-MEN, THAT'S OUR
AND GRIFFIN, WHEN I FIND HIM.

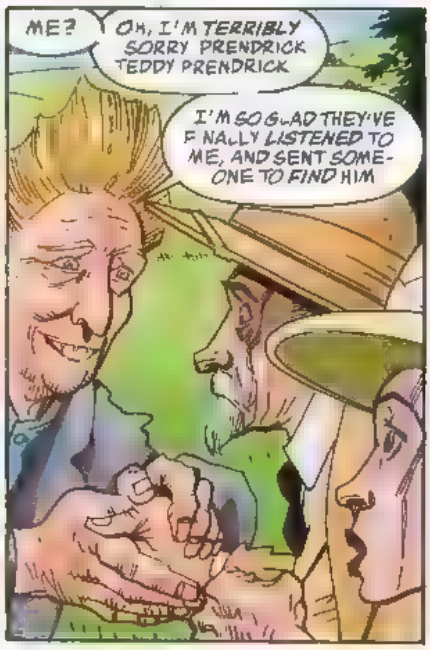
IF WE FIND HIM, WHICH IS, I THINK, NOT LIKELY
BES DES, IF I WERE MISS MURRAY I SHOULD NOT LIKE TO M.SS THAT EVENT
SHE WOULD WANT TO BE THERE FOR IT.

NO
NO, I DON'T BELIEVE SHE WOULD SHE IS DIFFERENT TO US, NEMO
AND SHE'S BETTER OFF WHERE SHE IS

THE STARS
THEY TOLD ME I SHOULD MEET PEOPLE

THAT'S,
THAT'S IF YOU ARE PEOPLE


KEEP YOUR DISTANCE, BLAST YOU! OF COURSE WE'RE PEOPLE! WHAT ELSE WOULD WE BE?
AND WHO THE DEVIL ARE YOU?
DON'T SHOUT..

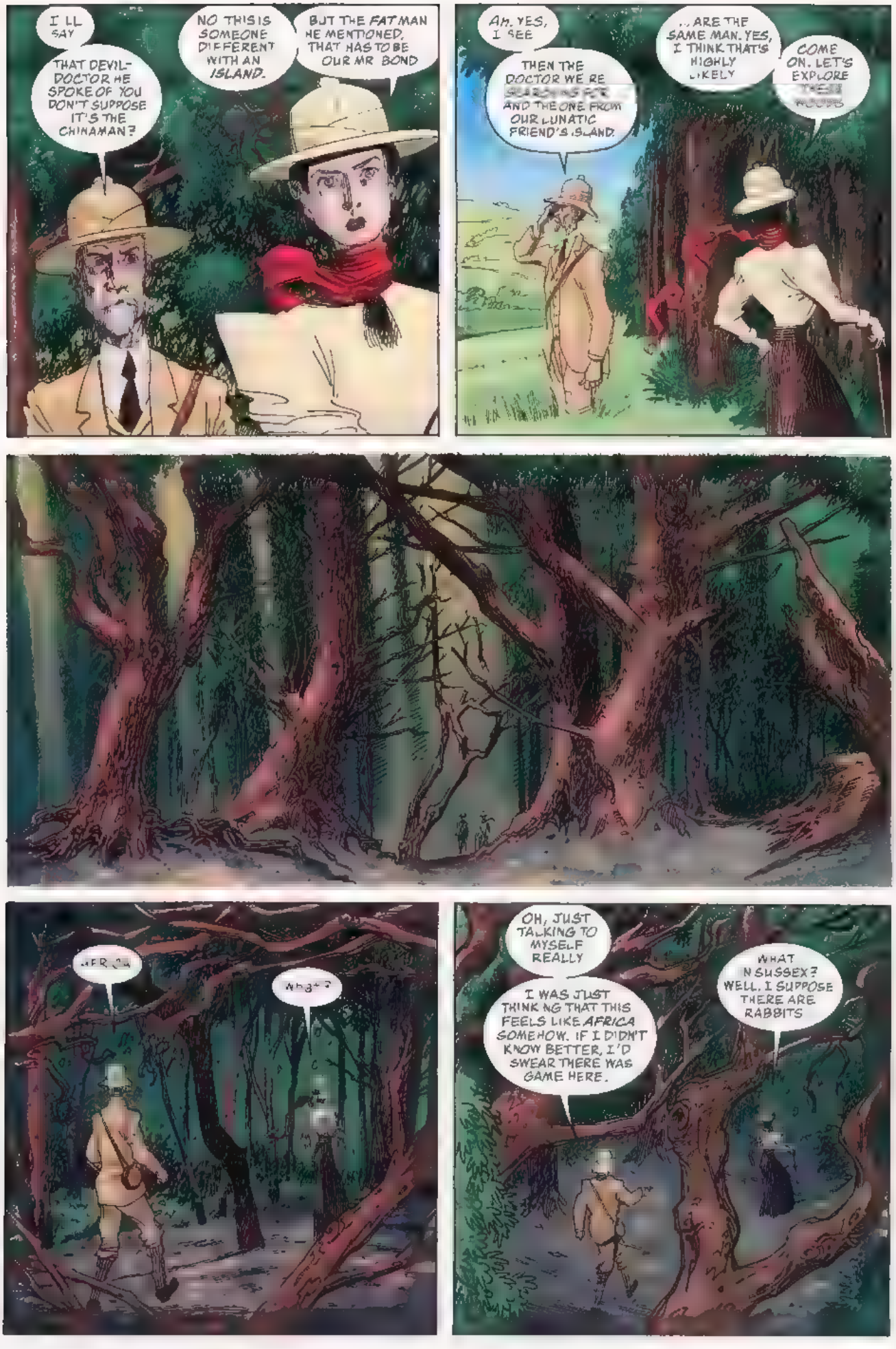

ME?
OH, I'M TERRIBLY SORRY PRENDRICK TEDDY PRENDRICK
I'M SO GLAD THEY'VE FINALLY LISTENED TO ME, AND SENT SOMEONE TO FIND HIM

THAT THAT WOULD RATHER DEPEND ON WHOM IT IS YOU SUPPOSE US TO BE LOOKING FOR
WHY, THE DOCTOR, OF COURSE
THE DEVIL DOCTOR

EVERYONE THOUGHT HE'D DIED ON HIS ISLAND, BUT I KNOW
I COULD SEE HIS HANDIWORK ABOUT ME EVERYWHERE!
RUTTING ON ALL FOURS LIKE..
LIKE

...AND THE PLUMP CHAP I MET ON MY RETURN! GOVERNMENT CHAP! HE KNEW
YOU COULD SEE T
SEE IT IN HIS PIGGY EYES

THIS MAN... DID HE HAVE A LITTLE MOUSTACHE? MACASSAR OIL IN HIS HAIR?
THAT'S HIM! AND HE KNEW! HE KNEW ABOUT THE ISLAND!
I'M SURE HE DID
AND YOU SAY THAT THIS DOCTOR... IS SOMEWHERE NEARBY?
WELL, YES IT'S OBVIOUS. I'VE SEEN THEM THE ONES HE'S ALTERED.
YOU THINK THEY'RE PEOPLE, BUT LOOK CLOSER! THEY'RE ANIMALS!
WHAT SEEMS A MAN WILL HAVE THE EYES OF AN OLD HUNTING DOG
OR PERHAPS THEY'RE FELINE. SOFT AND SLEEK TO ALL APPEARANCES, BUT STEALTHY! VICIOUS!
DO YOU KNOW THE TYPE OF WHOM I SPEAK MADAM?
Hm?
YES
Y-YES, I RATHER THINK THAT YOU DO.
I'VE SAID TOO MUCH ALREADY
D-DON'T TRY TO FOLLOW ME!
I'VE SET TRAPS FOR YOUR SORT!
TRAPS!
What a peculiar fellow


I LL SAY
THAT DEVIL-DOCTOR HE SPOKE OF YOU DON'T SUPPOSE IT'S THE CHINAMAN?
NO THIS IS SOMEONE DIFFERENT WITH AN ISLAND.
BUT THE FAT MAN HE MENTIONED, THAT HAS TO BE OUR MR BOND
AH. YES, I SEE
THEN THE DOCTOR WE RE [illegible] AND THE ONE FROM OUR LUNATIC FRIEND'S ISLAND.
.. ARE THE SAME MAN. YES, I THINK THAT'S HIGHLY LIKELY
COME ON. LET'S EXPLORE THESE WOODS
[illegible]
Ahg+?
OH, JUST TALKING TO MYSELF REALLY
I WAS JUST THINK NG THAT THIS FEELS LIKE AFRICA SOMEHOW. IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SWEAR THERE WAS GAME HERE.
WHAT N SUSSEX? WELL, I SUPPOSE THERE ARE RABBITS

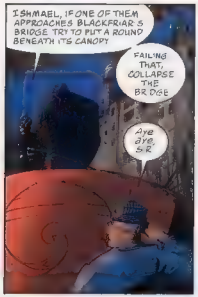
NO, I MEAN BIG GAME TIGER BEAR I CAN ALMOST SMELL IT ON THE BREEZE
AND THAT FEELING OF BEING WATCHED BY HIDDEN EYES.
I HADN'T NOTICED ALL THIS HUNTER TALK S JOLLY ST RR NG THOUGH

NEVER MIND
YOU KNOW, THAT MADMAN, PRENDRICK, H S PRESENCE MIGHT BE A GOOD SIGN HE'S CLEARLY OBSESSED WITH OUR MYSTERIOUS DOCTOR
H.S PROXIMITY MEANS THAT WE'RE CLOSE. PERHAPS THIS "SLAND" WAS A PREVIOUS BASE.

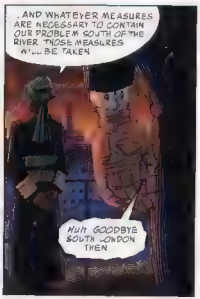
YES. THAT CHAP SAID SOMETH NG ABOUT EVERYONE THINKING OUR DOCTOR WAS DEAD
F MI. TARY INTELLIGENCE HAD SIMPLY MOVED H M HERE WELL, THAT FITS WITH THEIR USUAL TACTICS
I MEAN, I'M S.PPOSED.Y DEAD. GRIFFIN, HYDE, NEMO...

YES STAGED DEATHS ARE RATHER A SPECIALTY. I SOMETIMES WONDER ABOUT M'S BROTHER
WE'LL SEARCH A LITTLE LONGER, SHALL WE? IF WE HAVE NO LUCK WE CAN RETURN TO OUR INN AND PLAN FOR TOMORROW

SU TS ME
FRANKLY I D RATHER BE FACING SPACE-MEN WITH HYDE AND NEMO THAN TRAMPING THROUGH TH S SHR.BBERY
OH, ALLAN, DON'T BE SO DREARY ABOUT E.ERYTHING
TELL ME SOME MORE ABOUT HUNTING


ISHMAEL, IF ONE OF THEM APPROACHES BLACKFRIAR'S BRIDGE TRY TO PUT A ROUND BENEATH ITS CANOPY
FAILING THAT, COLLAPSE THE BRIDGE
AYE AYE, SIR

COLLAPSE THE BRIDGE? WITH ALL THOSE INNOCENT LIVES? Ohhh, NEMO!
DO NOT MOCK ME HORROR
THE THAMES IS LONDON'S MOAT NOW


AND WHATEVER MEASURES ARE NECESSARY TO CONTAIN OUR PROBLEM SOUTH OF THE RIVER, THOSE MEASURES WILL BE TAKEN
HUH. GOODBYE SOUTH LONDON THEN

SIMPLY
IF WE ARE FORTUNATE THERE ARE NO MORE CANNISTERS TO COME
THOSE CREATURES ALREADY HERE CAN ONLY DESTROY SO MUCH

AS FOR THE POPULATION HOPEFULLY THEY CAN ESCAPE IN TIME
IF NOT 'TIS HARDLY A MAJOR STRATEGIC LOSS THEY ARE ONLY
HUMAN?

ENGLISH

...JUST SAYING THAT IF WE FIND NOTH NG TO-MORROW, WE SHOULD RETURN TO..
HUSH ALLAN
MISS MOPP GOOD EVENING
EVENN MR AND MRS QUATERMAIN

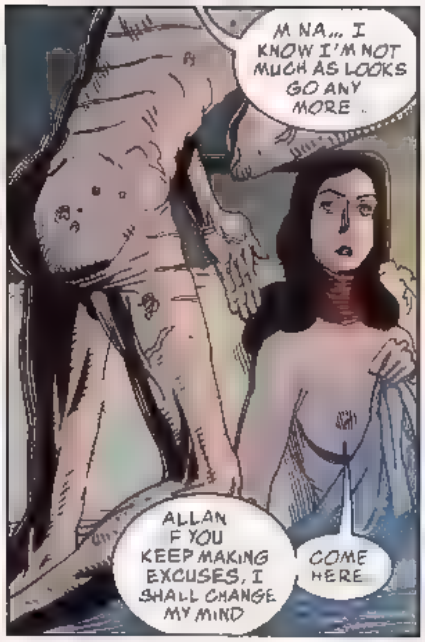
SHALL I DO YOU NOW FOR SUPPER, OR W LL YOU BE GOING STRAIGHT UP?
OH WE THOUGHT WE'D RETIRE EARLY, DIDN'T WE DEAREST?

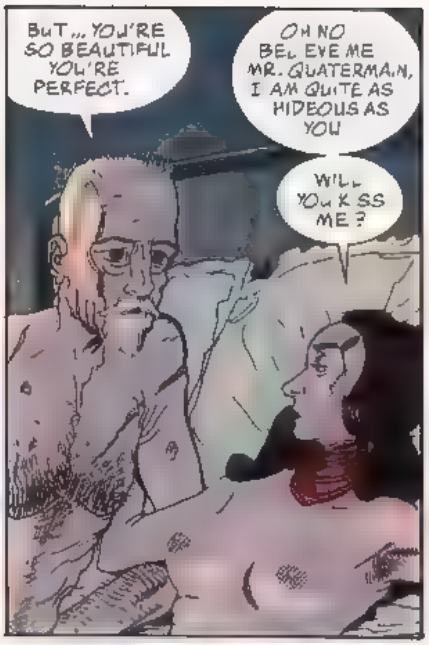
WELL, I'LL DO YOU FOR BREAKFAST AT E GHT SHARP, IF THAT'S ALL RIGHT?
I'M SURE THAT WILL BE MOST ADEQUATE
COME ALONG DEAR

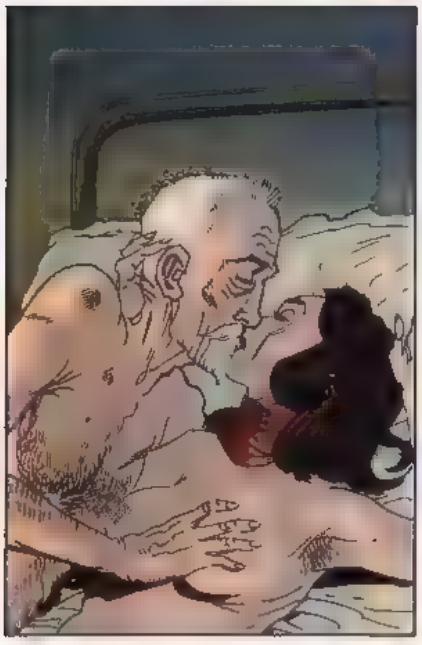
WHAT ON EARTH WAS ALL THAT N A D OF?
HA HA HA. OH, ALLAN, THE LOOK ON YOUR FACE.
I WAS KEEPING UP APPEARANCES.

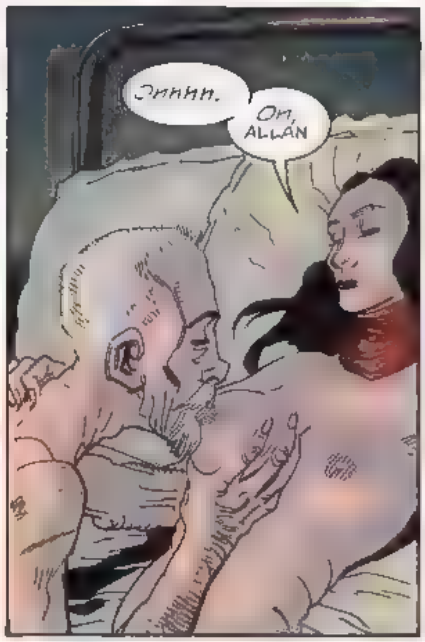
IF YOU RECALL, WE RE ON A HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL MISS ON, PUR-PORTING TO BE A HAPPILY MARRIED COUPLE.
I COULD HARDLY BOOK SEPARATE ROOMS, COULD I?

MINA, THIS IS THE LAST STRAW!
I'VE WALKED ALL DAY! DAMNED IF I'M SHIVERING ON THE FLOORBOARDS WHILE YOU SLEEP IN COMFORT AGAIN!
NO ONE SAID YOU HAD TO.
IT IS ENTIRELY UP TO YOU WHERE YOU SLEEP MR. QUATERMAIN, I AM QUITE SURE
What
:HUHURRM:
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
EXACTLY?
Oh God Oh Mina
PLEASE, MR. QUATERMAIN. YOU CANNOT BE SHOCKED AT YOUR AGE SURELY?
WOULD YOU LIKE TO UNFASTEN THIS WRETCHED THING?
I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY
MINA, I'M TOO OLD FOR YOU. I..
BE QUIET
WHEN I WAS SIXTEEN, I WORSHIPPED YOU
I'D READ IN BED BY CANDLELIGHT, AND IMAGINE YOU
SOMEWHERE TROPICAL, WITH FLIES AND LIZARDS
I-I'VE TRIED NOT TO IMAGINE YOU.
IT FELT WRONG
ALLAN, YOU ARE DEAD, WHILE I AM DIVORCED, DISGRACED AND DISREGARDED BY THE WORLD
COULD ANYTHING MAKE US MORE WRONG, DO YOU SUPPOSE?
NOW, UNLESS I'M TO FEEL EVEN SILLIER, PLEASE UNDRESS AND COME TO BED
AND KINDLY LEAVE THE LAMP JUST AS IT IS

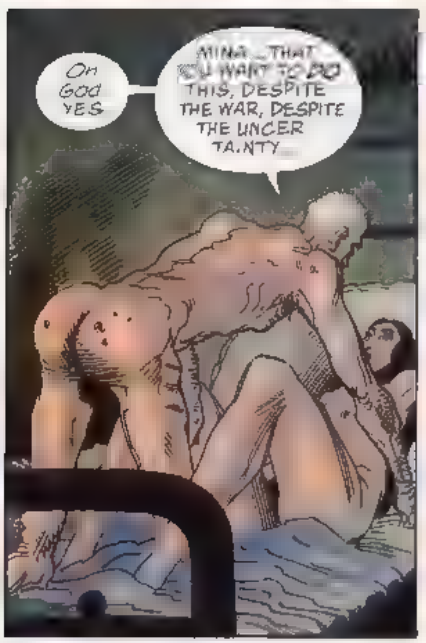

M NA... I KNOW I'M NOT MUCH AS LOOKS GO ANY MORE .
ALLAN F YOU KEEP MAKING EXCUSES, I SHALL CHANGE MY MIND
COME HERE


BUT... YOU'RE SO BEAUTIFUL YOU'RE PERFECT.
OH NO BEL EVE ME MR. QUATERMAIN, I AM QUITE AS HIDEOUS AS YOU
WILL YOU K SS ME ?

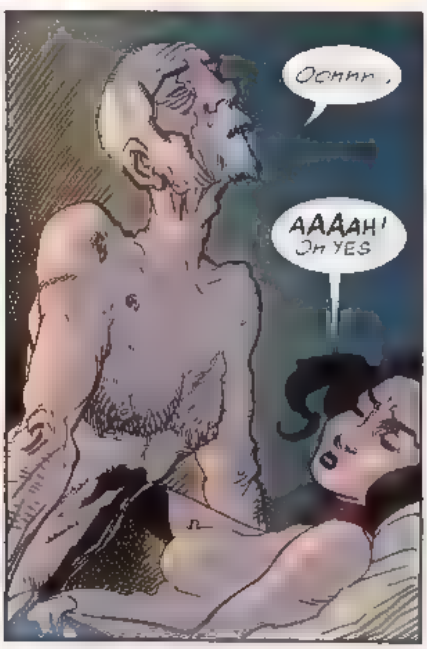



Ohhhh.
Oh, ALLAN

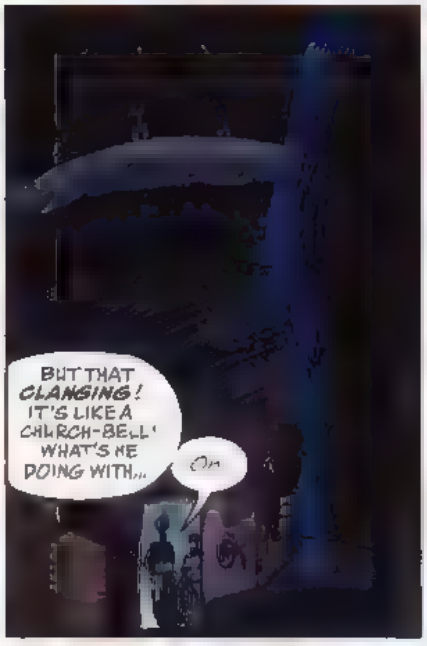
AOOWH.
Ohhh, God.
**** ME. PLEASE, **** ME

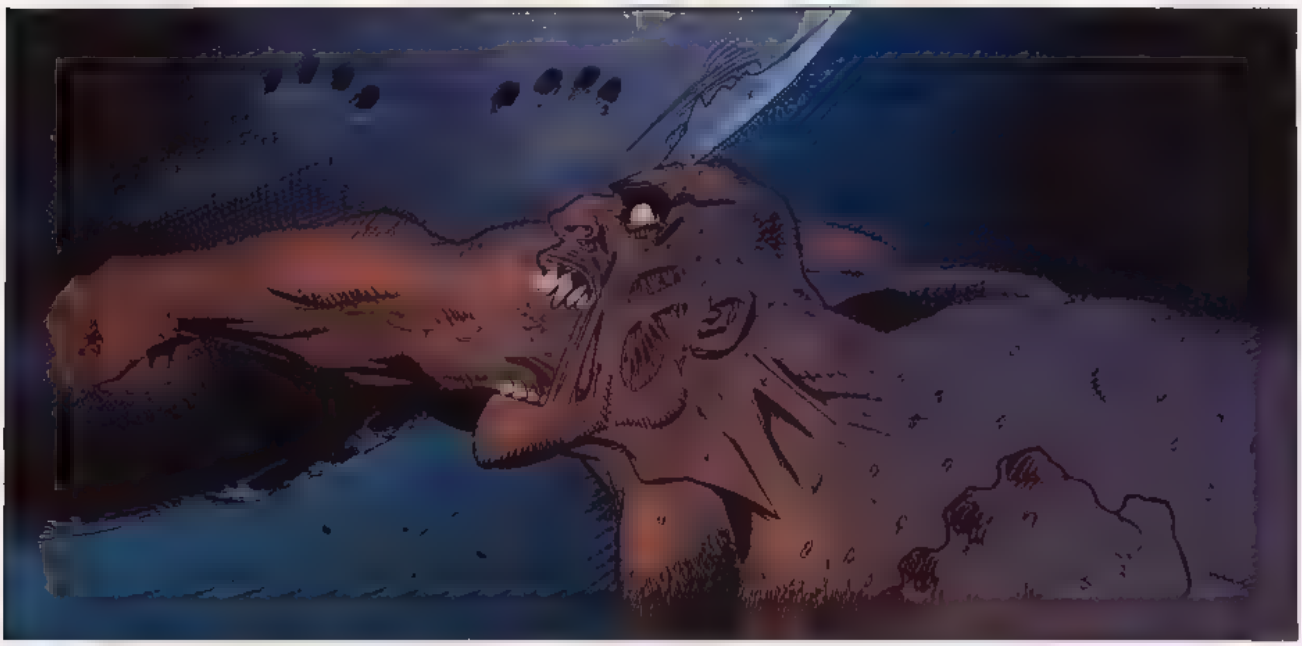

Oh God YES
MINA... THAT YOU WANT TO DO THIS, DESPITE THE WAR, DESPITE THE UNCER TA.NTY...

BECAUSE
BECAUSE OF THE WAR. BECAUSE OF THE UNCERTAINTY
THAT FEELS SO N CE. MOVE IT UPWARDS JUST A L TTLE MORE AND


Oohhh.
AAAAH! OH YES

WHAT'S THAT NOISE? WHERE IS IT COMING FROM?
IT'S YOUR MONSTER CHAP, CAPTAIN HYDE
HE'S WITH THE MARS-WRECKAGE WE SALVAGED EARLIER


BUT THAT CLANGING! IT'S LIKE A CHURCH-BELL! WHAT'S HE DOING WITH...
Oh



:HAHHH:
:HURHHH:
:HUHHHH:
I CAN'T I CAN'T KEEP THIS UP
ROLL ONTO YOUR BACK
ROLL ONTO YOUR BACK
Ouhhh
M NA MINA, THIS IS SO..
Oh God
B te me
B te my shoulder P ease
B te

ARRRRR!
RRRAGHHH!!
YOU SEE, WHAT IT S, IT'S A SUBMARINE.
T GOES UNDER E WATER UNDER THE RIVER, YES?
THAT S RIGHT KE A FISH
mene
THIS S WHAT'S STOPPING YOU FROM CROSSING THE THAMES.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND THIS SUB-MARINE
YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING TO DESTROY IT
YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING TO THE RIVER
Oh Oh Oh
OHHHHH!

Summm
MINA? ARE YOU AWAKE?
MINA?
Hmmm?
NO. NO, I'M AWAKE
ALLAN, THAT WAS WONDERFUL. I..
What?
WHAT S T?
I see
NOT QUITE THE TWO DISCREET PUNCTURE-MARKS OF LEGEND, ARE THEY?
GOODNIGHT, MR. QUATERMAIN
example. Should this a sinful thing reason fa to persuade you to, its long abstinence fear not for there shall be another such fierce nstruction in our next socially responsible number

Chapter Four

Africa and The Middle East: Lights of a Dark Continent

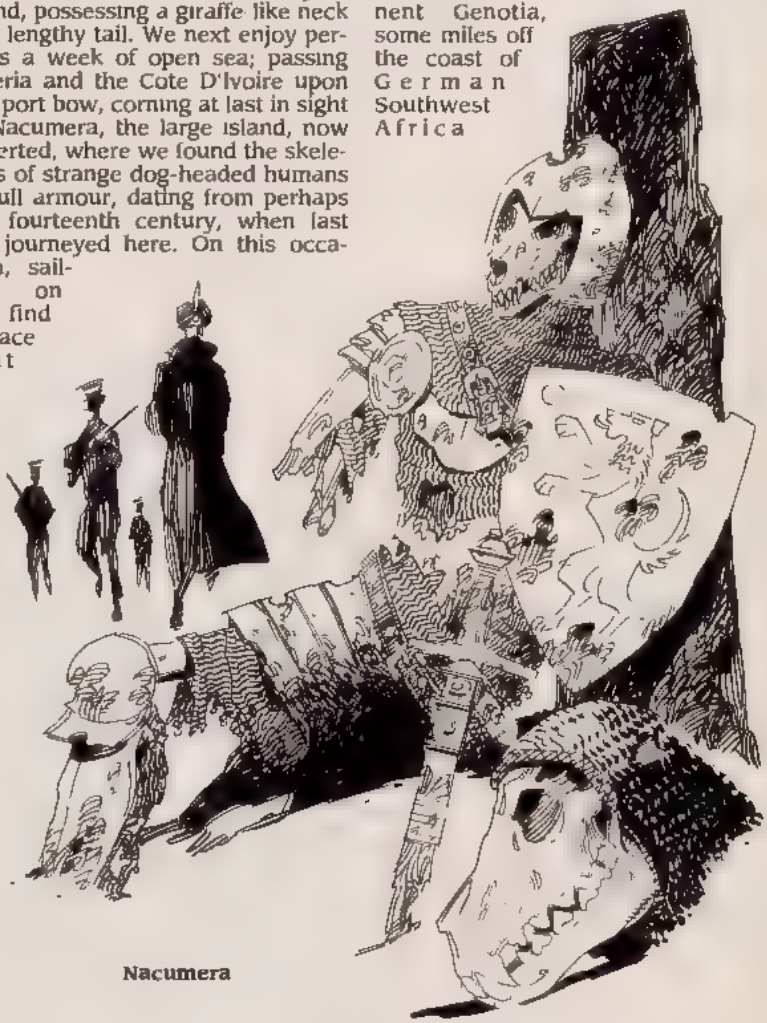
In 1899, returned from harrowing experiences in the Americas, Miss Wilhelmina Murray and her sole remaining partner in the league that she had founded a year earlier, Mr. Allan Quatermain, found themselves involved in Government investigations into the United Avondale Phalanstery, then but recently established, that would occupy them until the late months of 1900, whereupon they both resolved to make their postponed trip to Africa Perhaps the most mysterious of the continents discussed within this almanac, such knowledge as we have of Africa from our accumulated logs and journals is gleaned for the most part from accounts originating either with Quatermain or with his former comrade Captain Nemo, although the ambiguous figure Orlando, seemingly affiliated to the Prospero, Gulliver and later Murray groups, has also made his or her contribution

As is becoming clear from this ongoing exploration of our world and its locations, many of the most exotic sites would seem to be found upon curious, secluded islands, and in this Africa is no exception, with perhaps a third of all its mystery locales found situated upon isles within its coastal waters Captain Nemo, in addition to the base that he maintained at Lincoln Island (as discussed in our last chapter), also made use of an underground port known as Nautilus Harbour, within an extinct volcano on one of the Canary Islands off the northwest coast of Africa. From here he travelled to and charted all the islands and, indeed, small continents found in the South Atlantic off Africa's western coasts. Upon the seabed east of his volcanic grotto, his log notes a great proliferation of stone ruins that Nemo thought to be the submerged townships of Atlantis, with his commentary also making mention of similar architectural relics found in the north most extremes of the Sahara, such as the much feared and fabled Nameless City, which brings up the intriguing possibility that the lost continent may have included northern Africa, at one time, in its territories.

Wilhelmina Murray, travelling to Africa in 1900, in the last months of the nineteenth century, records the islands passed off the Moroccan coast, just after her reports of those isles found off Portugal, as mentioned in our opening chapter "We sailed past bleak Mongaza Island, where with good eyes you can see the horrid idol raised beside the so-called Boiling Lake. A giant called Famongomadan apparently sacrificed young virgins to the idol in the early sixteenth century, by which time I thought science had assured us the giant race of Earth's prehistory was long extinct. Travelling on we passed Mogador, a walled island city with the most peculiar hollow dragons on its battlements, through which the wind keens hauntingly. I confess that when I heard the sound my eyes filled up, and I thought of our former comrade, Nemo, who I am informed once kept an island base near here, in a volcano. I wish things had not ended with him in the way they did. I became so melancholy that I barely noticed the Fixed Isle, separated from Morocco by the slenderest ocean channel, which if I recall my girlhood's history lessons properly was ruled by Amadis of Gaul at one time. We sailed on (I fancied that I spied at one point the volcanic isle in the Canaries that was Nemo's stronghold, but this no doubt was just wistful imagination) and at last, passing the isle of Lixus whereupon gold hornet-bees drone busily about the island's sole surviving gold-leafed tree, we put to shore near Nouakchott upon the western coast of Mauritania "

Nemo himself lists many of the islands south of here in records of a voyage made to the Cape of Good Hope during the July of 1890 "We avoid the islands known as the Harmattan Rocks where cormorants fish for pearls, surrounded as they are by dangerous spars and boulders that make navigation hazardous, and soon pass by the isle called No-Man's-Land, where I have heard a curious crocodilian creature may be found, possessing a giraffe like neck and lengthy tail. We next enjoy perhaps a week of open sea; passing Liberia and the Cote D'Ivoire upon our port bow, coming at last in sight of Nacumera, the large island, now deserted, where we found the skeletons of strange dog-headed humans in full armour, dating from perhaps the fourteenth century, when last we journeyed here. On this occasion, sailing on we find a place that I have previously heard of, called the Island of the Blessed. This is a charming place, draped in what seems perpetual twilight, and with scented breezes blowing from the long-dry bed of what was once, I'm told, a river of perfume Of the ethereal spirit beings that once lived here, numinous forms dressed in purple shawls of spider-web, nothing is to be seen, and I suppose they are no more. We travel onward, passing by Wild Island where I am informed the local fauna have enlisted a live dragon in their service, though I am surprised in that one seldom hears of such things this far west, at least not these days. It may be that the dragon has its origins on Silha, further south, where live such venomous beasts beside a lake, said to be formed by tears from the first man and woman when they lived there after being cast from Paradise.

"Silha is the most northerly island of the Dondum Archipelago, where are the remains of many curious peoples to be found, most notably hermaphrodites, dwarves with mouths in the top of the their heads, and also a species of quadrupedal humans who would seem to have been covered in bright feathers. On Dondum itself I've seen the massive skulls of cyclopean giants and many other things besides, but in this instance cannot linger and so pass on south towards the minor continent Genotia, some miles off the coast of German Southwest Africa



Nacumera

Piracy has a long tradition in Genotia and its surrounding isles, and I have always found that I am welcome here, even amongst the Mithras-worshippers found in Ximeque, Genotia's largest region Gynopyrea, on Genotia's southern coast, is infamous for its effeminate behaviour and its men-girls. It is subsequently far too popular amongst a certain section of my crew, and we head on past Neopie Island, which perhaps goes too far to the opposite extreme in that, being once ruled by Amazons, women are by and large detested, with all foreign females put to death Pandocila, nearby, is similar in that its women are controlled more strictly than its men, as is quite proper, with a curfew that forbids them to go out during the evening. Nimpatan, a large island of silk garbed and gold-worshipping scoundrels, lies further south, and I tell Ishmael to remind me we should plunder it on our way back from Cape Town, our eventual destination."

Though it would seem that Nemo travelled very little in the Indian Ocean, it is thanks to documents found amongst the effects of the great Sikh submariner after his death by one Miss Diver that we know so much about that area's islands. A collector of rare nautical exotica and memorabilia, Nemo had during the 1880s purchased an old parchment manuscript, in Arabic, later authenticated as one of the last surviving copies of the log kept by the famed seagoing Iraqi adventurer Sindbad. It is from this fragile document that we have gathered the majority of the accounts below relating to the islands found off Africa's east coast and in the more northerly climes of the Arabian Sea.

The most southerly of these islands is Canthahar, where the long lived and agile inhabitants worshipped Monsky, the Sun, and Raka, the Moon, while nearby Cucumber Island, off the east coast of South Africa, is said by Sindbad to be famous for its tree grown cucumbers and its ferocious windstorms. Three unnamed islands mentioned in the manuscript are probably those settled by the now obligatory shipwrecked Englishman, a sometime-associate of Lemuel Gulliver named Sir Charles Smith who was cast up there during 1740, and called by him New Britain. One of these, Rock Island, is still populated by devout religious nudists who engrave the Ten Commandments on each wall of every dwelling.

Further north, just south of Madagascar, is the isle of Taprobane with its fabulous City of the Sun, where Sindbad mentions a peculiar serpent with a head at each end, while on nearby Bustrol he reports that the inhabitants have formed themselves into perfect square provinces. Upon the Madagascan mainland he describes the northern swamp-isle of Aepyornis, with its talking fourteen-foot-tall birds, which he supposes to be related to the giant avian Rocs that he had once encountered further north. He also notes that some way east of Madagascar is an island where the cliffs, viewed from the sea, resemble nothing so much as a massive human skull, where monstrously proportioned primates had allegedly been seen, along with dragons, Rocs and other creatures of that nature. Just north east of Madagascar off the coast of Mozambique, although not mentioned by the legendary Iraqi sailor, there exists a mountainous island where in 1782 a stranded Englishwoman, Mrs Hannah Hewit, built not only her own house of clay bricks but also a mechanical man as a companion (and possibly, as certain sailors' stories have indecently suggested, as a paramour). Meillcourt, further north still, was in Sindbad's time the province of the peaceful Troglocites and Quacacites, and had not yet been named after the French explorer shipwrecked here during the early eighteenth century, while on nearby "Island of Iron" Marbotikin Dulda, he makes glowing mention of the temple called Miudia-bio, with its colossal statue of the deity built so that its twelve zodiac sign heads rotate according to the phases of the moon.

From here, just off the coast of Kenya, up to the Arabian Sea itself extends a marvellous archipelago containing perhaps a score of islands, the majority of which were first explored by Sindbad or else his acquaintances. Rondule, the island furthest south, ruled by a hundred chieftains, is famed for the frequent laughter of its jovial people, while on Lamary the naked locals hold women in common and subsist, it's said, upon a diet of fattened children. A sub-group of islands nearby, the Waq archipelago, are said by Sindbad to be ruled by women and roamed by both genii and wild beasts, while of one of the otherwise unremarkable islands of Waq Sindbad makes the mystifying observation that it would make a bad place for a small group of schoolboys to be marooned. Feather Island, not far off, is possibly a part of the Waq archipelago in that its sole inhabitants are women, although these females have gorgeous feathers in the stead of body hair. To the north, the isle where

stands the Mihragian Kingdom is the one location in the world where the sea stallions come ashore to mate, while King's Kingdom, on an adjacent island, is believed to be the burial site of Solomon, son of David. Sindbad also mentions fearsome serpents here, and mountain-sized fish found in the island's coastal waters. The island empire Pentuxore is close at hand, with its magnetic rocks and bestial, horned wildmen, and off Somalia's coast exists the rival Azanian Empire, where the cannibal Sakuyu tribe would sometimes trade anthropophagous recipes with cousins from far Lamary.

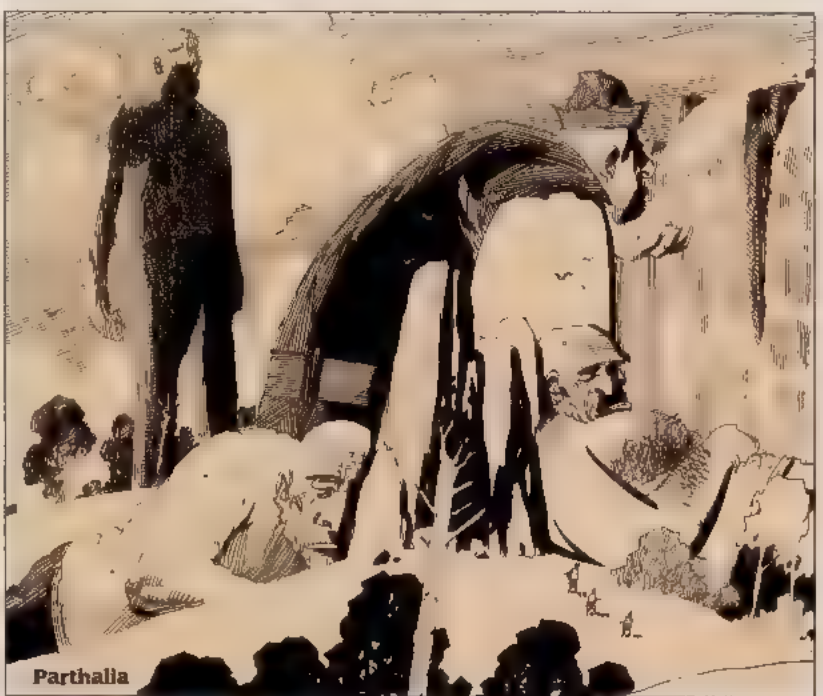
Double Island, which seems to both rise and submerge at will, lies to the east, while Camphor Island, known for its generous camphor trees and giant horned animal, the *karkadann*, lies further west, as does the island of the Diamond Mountains, where carnivorous jewels can strip the avaricious and unwary traveller down to a skeleton in seconds. Continuing north we pass Old Man of the Sea Island, with its terrible ancient inhabitant reputedly killed by Sindbad, though we only have the mariner's own word for this, and the island of The Mountain of Clouds, its peak only accessible to one wrapped in camel hide and then carried aloft by a vulture. The nearby Island of Grey Amber, meanwhile, has its tide-lines strewn with so much cast up treasure that it is to this day renowned as a beachcomber's paradise, whereas Bragman, the Land of Faith, was so devout and dull that Alexander couldn't be bothered to conquer it. The people of the Island of Connubial Sacrifice, at least as they're described by Sindbad, customarily entomb live partners with dead spouses, while a neighbouring tribe will drug visitors with a concoction of coconut milk and hallucinogens before serving them up, cooked or raw, at their banquets.

Manghalour, off the coastline of Saudi Arabia, is another colony established by a shipwrecked Frenchman in the eighteenth century by the simple expedient of overthrowing and then exiling the isle's existing Muslim leadership, and if we venture into the Red Sea we find both the linguistically extraordinary island known as Polyglot, and also Taerg Natib, whose twenty-foot-tall population are all strictly Protestant, and where Papists have thus been summarily burned since the early fifteenth century. In the Arabian Sea near the mouth of the Persian Gulf we have Calonack, not far from Pakistan, where people live within the gorgeous shells of giant molluscs and where every species of the world's fish may be found in staggering profusion off the island's coasts, while further west, Parthalia is inhabited by giants of great longevity, one of whom was said to have assisted in constructing Rome. Astounding though these many islands be, we must now focus our attentions on the mainland, and, commencing with the Middle East, work westward into Africa itself.

Furthest south, sharing borders with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Persia we have the mountainous country Ardistan and its surrounding territories, as described by League associates William Samson Senior and his son, also called William Samson, the feared (and currently famed) "Wolf of Kabul." Reports filed by the Samsons over a fifty year period from around 1850 to the present day describe a fascinating range of sites, not least of which is the immense and glorious palace of the Mir of Ardistan as found in Ard, the capital, reputedly constructed by giant craftsmen from nearby Parthalia. A triple-headed volcano called Djebbel Allah on the northern borders makes a hazard of the route to neighbouring El Hadd, home of the much admired white lancers, while nearby lands such as Djinnistan, Djunubistan, Ussulistan, Tshobanistan and the giant built isthmus known as the Chatar Defile have been characterised by the younger Mr. Samson as "pest-holes of tyrants and warlords who seem to find no higher purpose in life than destroying and maiming each other. I have a good mind to let Chung take his *Clicky-Ba* to the whole bloody lot of them." Forty years earlier, his father had made similar remarks concerning the adjacent warring lands of Farghestan and the old Christian kingdom of Orsenna: "If these people have got so much respect for God, then why are they always bloody showing him up in public? I had respect for our Mum, but if I'd gone and massacred half the kids next door she'd have been mortified. She'd never have set foot past our front step again."

The Garamanti tribe inhabiting the Rifei mountains in Afghanistan, with their fanatically observed laws (all offspring after a couple's third child put to death; worship of more than two gods at a time punishable by death; those inventing any new laws condemned to death) also come in for vivid criticism from both Samsons, but we shall pass on towards the west and Persia, where we find the mountain-ringed land of Tallstoria, which employs convict labourers on public services, in reasonable conditions, as a less costly and preferable alternative to prison. Moving westward into neighbouring Iraq, a visit to Samarah and its splendid palace Alkoremi is advised, with the five adjoining palaces (dedicated to the pleasures of each of the five senses) built by the notoriously-damned Caliph Vathek. Not far away, upon the desert borders of Iraq and Syria, stands the fabulously jewelled and mosaic-decorated City of Sand, inhabited since the Crusades by the Sheik of the Mountain and his followers, but this is best seen from a distance, as the city does not welcome tourists. Indeed, it tends to poison them, then turn them loose into the barren desert, there to perish.

In Saudi Arabia, on the Iraqi border at the end of beautiful Fakreddin Valley is the ruined palace Ishtakar, with its black marble terraces where nothing grows, nor lives, and no birds sing, as mentioned by both the notorious Lord Byron and his fellow poet William Ashbless Underneath these terraces are rumoured to be chambers filled with evil genii, where the demon Eblis once held court in halls of marvellous treasures. It was for a glimpse of these that the doomed Caliph Vathek forfeited his soul, his heart bursting into eternal flame in consequence. From Ishtakar it's possible to see the jewel-like and almost unreachable city of Jannati Shah, at the foot of the dazzling Mountains of Gold, where in the first

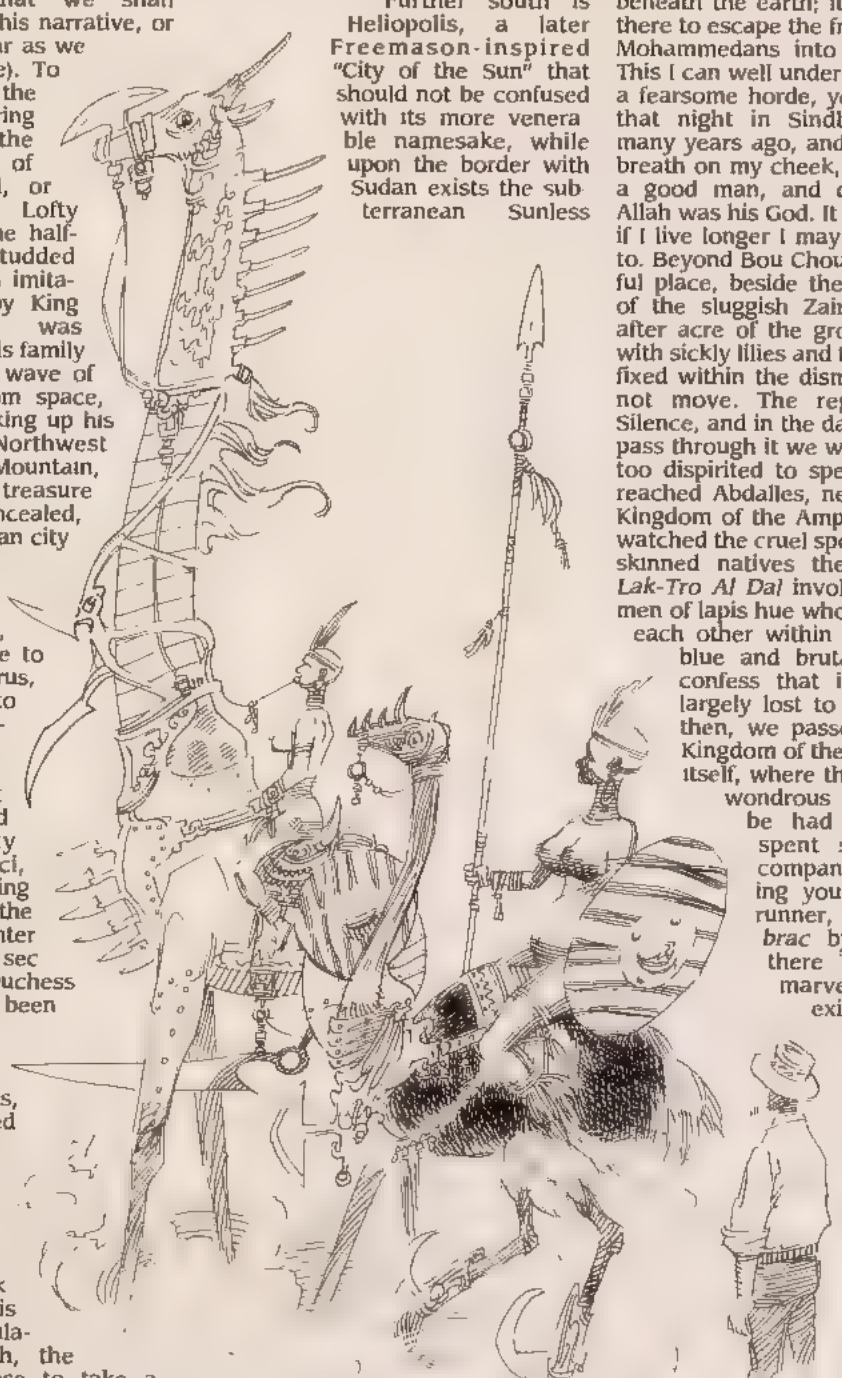


Parthalia

years of our current century a group of white men, mostly from America, ventured to steal the Great Pearl Star, bequeathed by a dying Mohammed to his most favoured wife Ayeshah (not related to the famously long lived West African Queen Ayesha that we shall encounter later in this narrative, or at least not in so far as we are currently aware). To the southwest, in the vast deserts bordering Yemen, are the gemmed remains of Irem Zat El Emad, or Irem with the Lofty Buildings, where the half-collapsed jewel-studded spires were built in imitation of Paradise by King Sheddad, who was destroyed with all his family and retainers by a wave of sound, perhaps from space, upon the eve of taking up his residency there. Northwest we pass Golden Mountain, where a sultan's treasure horde was once concealed, and skirt the Christian city Nova Solyma in Israel, where the citizens, despite their Christianity, believe the Universe to be a monstrous uterus, to come at last to Egypt and to continental Africa itself

In Egypt, on the Red Sea coast we find the ruined palace-principality called Here or Ici, given recently by King Fuad of Egypt to the sole surviving daughter of Czar Nicholas the second, the Grand Duchess Olga There have been rumours lately in the scandal sheets to the effect that the Grand Duchess, having been believed killed with her family in 1917, intends to make the fortress a refuge for other famous people who'd prefer the world to think them dead, but this is merely vulgar speculation. Further north, the traveller may choose to take a barge-trip down the curious Brissonte River with its mouth near that of the more famous Nile, and view the freakish tribes inhabiting its various river-islands, including men whose feet point backwards and who thus have difficulty in determining if they are coming, or, indeed, are going. Not far from the Brissonte, upon the beaches close to Alexandria, is Monsters' Park. Here, great Alexander famously repelled frequent invasions of sea-monsters by the clever ruse of building numerous gigantic replicas of the creatures themselves along the coastline, scaring the marauding monsters back into the ocean. These quite terrifying statues have survived the intervening ages well, commented on by both Orlando and, more recently, by Allan Quatermain

Further south is Heliopolis, a later Freemason-inspired "City of the Sun" that should not be confused with its more venerable namesake, while upon the border with Sudan exists the subterranean Sunless City, with its midnight galleries of guardian gods and monsters, not far from Khartoum



In Libya, to the west, we have locations mentioned by the ever-young and slender gallant named Orlando, who adventured in North Africa during the early sixteenth century, apparently a male during this part of his or her career. "I journeyed to the northwest with my bearers into Libya and therein sought the Kingdom of the Amphicleocles, where it is said the men are red as devils while the women are as pale as alabaster, and methinks that both alike sound fair and sweet. We passed the ruined citadel of Bou Chougga and heard rumours of a Christian settlement beneath the earth; its founders fled there to escape the frightful influx of Mohammedans into the continent. This I can well understand They are a fearsome horde, yet when I slept that night in Sindbad's arms so many years ago, and felt his spiced breath on my cheek, I knew he was a good man, and devout, though Allah was his God. It is a puzzle that if I live longer I may see an answer to. Beyond Bou Chougga is a dreadful place, beside the yellow waters of the sluggish Zaire, where acre after acre of the ground is choked with sickly lilies and the clouds hang fixed within the dismal sky, and do not move. The region is called Silence, and in the days it took us to pass through it we were all of us far too dispirited to speak. At last we reached Abdalles, neighbour to the Kingdom of the Amphicleocles, and watched the cruel sports of the blue-skinned natives there. The game *Lak-Tro Al Dal* involves five naked men of lapis hue who beat and whip each other within inches of their blue and brutal lives, and I confess that its appeal was largely lost to me. At length, then, we passed on into the Kingdom of the Amphicleocles itself, where there were many wondrous experiences to be had and where I spent some time in company with a beguiling youthful message runner, called a *Foulbrac* by the peoples there These are most marvellously light, existing on a diet of naught but down and cobwebs, and on insubstantial foodstuffs of this like, so make for splendid partners in a dance, or otherwise."

South of Libya, the Republic of Chad is described in part by Allan Quatermain, who visited the area during the course of what are surely his most famous exploits. "Heading into Chad we had the Mountains of the Moon behind us to the north, and Umbopa fairly put the wind up Curtis, Good and I by telling us that we were now in Arimaspian Country, where the one-eyed natives wage continual war against the gryphon population. When he told us about Mermecolions (half lion, half ant, they can eat neither

flesh nor grain and thus will always die for want of sustenance) we knew the rogue was joking with us Then, a mile south, Curtis tripped upon a skeleton half buried in the under growth that looked like that of some enormous lion, yet had a beak, and now we don t know what to think " An unspecified time later, perhaps days or even weeks, Quatermain makes the following entry. "As we passed from Chad through Central Africa, we made camp in Albino Land, a region sparsely populated by albino Negroes, rather slight of build and with the finest, whitest hair I've ever touched. Their eyes are also quite remarkable, like those of birds. It is a strange effect that suits them well, especially the females. Whatever idle thoughts I had of these grew dim, however, when we moved south into Makalolo and I saw the women warriors there, tall Nubian beauties pledged to fight in service of a monarchy made up of Queen and Queen. We had the fortune to observe a military parade of these, spears glinting in the sun, all mounted upon armoured ostriches or else on towering war-giraffes, a spectacle I shall remember all my days

"Continuing south, we made hard going of Zaire, thanks largely to our difficulties with the many local tribes such as the ferocious Bulanga and the utterly dreadful wife trading cannibals of the M'tezo, who eat all their spare female relatives. We skirted round a hamlet called Ben Khatour's Village that's allegedly some sort of Arab colony, and then, crossing an arid plain into the densest and most lushly fertile jungle I have ever known, we came into the kingdom Pal-Ul Don. Here, in A lur, the well-named City of Lights, we almost thought that we had found the place our expedition is in search of, so astounding are the carven terraces of pallid limestone with their monster heads in startling relief (these were not wholly unlike the supposed gryphon skeleton we thought we'd found in Arimaspian Country, but bigger, with a ruff of bone behind the head and two rhino like horns grown from the beak). Passing on, however, on the south horizon we at last beheld the miles-high peaks called by the local people Saba's Breasts, which mark the plateau Kukuanaland whereon we hope to find our goal, the dia mond-laden lost mines of King Solomon himself."

Returning the attentions of our Almanac to the southeast we come to Abyssinia and the neighbouring Kingdom of Ishmaelia, widely known today as a focus of European busi ness interests, that unfortunately does not enjoy the usual subsequent prosperity. Before Ishmaelia came to prominence, however, Abyssinia itself was commented upon at length by League associate Orlando, visiting the area in the early sixteenth century. "How many years, I wonder, has it been, or centuries, since last I knew the pleasure of these sands between my toes? Travelling without company I soon came to those dear, familiar ruins in the north, set on their stone plateau; those tumbled relics of a city that I still walk in my dreams of childhood, where my girlish fingertips still know each dent in each worn stone as though it were a long lost cousin. Tethering my horse I found my way through the familiar labyrinths and chambers, mounting finally the old iron ladder to our city's central courtyard, or at least its remnants. Some of my old fellows left their hole-like dwellings at the city's outskirts to come greet me, though the Troglodyte condition is much worse in them, and has advanced since last we met I hardly could make out a word they spoke, though our discourse was amiable, and they seemed most amazed to find me now a man, insisting that I drop my britches and provide them evidence of this. I asked after my much beloved old Greek friend, Mr. Cartaphilus, but from what I could make out of their reply they have not seen him for some time, and think that he still roams the world disconsolately, seeking some even tual cure for what he views as our abiding curse.

"I left the city once more, and continued on to Nubia where perfumed Senapho is ruler, though I knew him when men called him Prester John. Along my way I saw again the places I remember from my youth, like lovely Saba (native name for Sheba who was consort to King Solomon). In the southwest, they say, are mountains named for Saba's breasts, close by bright diamond mines that the great King and sorcerer once owned It is at Saba here in Abyssinia, though, that Solomon and Sheba's tomb is found, all made from gold and crystal and shot through with precious jewels. The tomb is somewhat overgrown, though I saw several of the natives as they worked to trim the rampant vegetation back. They were all men in middle life and thus their skin had stripes of black and yellow, for the Sabans are born with a hide of brilliant daffodil that turns as dark as night come their old age. I journeyed on, and rode a while beside the Marvellous River where I saw a unicorn and tiger, both asleep together on the further shore, and to the east I heard the music of sun-worshippers with gongs and cymbals, carried on a dusk breeze from the Temple of the Sun in Mezzorania, its distant spires and bridges blazing in the last lights of the day "

Elsewhere in the same documents Orlando makes mention of the City of the Apes, ransacked and pillaged nightly by ferocious simi ans, not far east in the southern reaches of Somaliland All these areas are today, of course, part of the larger country known as Freeland, a vast independent state established in the 1880s by the International Free Society, extending down the continent past Kenya into Tanganyika and the Sultanate of Zanzibar. Close by, on Tanganyika's coastline we find Jolliginki, where the Land of Monkeys is located It was here that the great naturalist John Dolittle (a school friend of George Edward Challenger, occasional consultant to Miss Murray's secondly-assembled League) discovered the purportedly two headed animal that caused such an intense controversy amongst zoologists and scientists around the century's end, unequalled until the discovery of Piltdown Man in 1912. A little further south, upon the coast of Portuguese East Africa, there is Bong Tree Land, famed for its succulent ring-sporting pigs, while further south still, passing swiftly though Basilisk Country and avoiding both its manticores and the lethal gaze of its native serpents, we reach Butua in Bechuanaland This cruel and bestial realm, notorious for the fearful treatment meted to its womenfolk, was said by Percy Blakeney to be an occasional resort for the depraved aristocrats of Stilling castle, high in Germany's Black Forest, as referred to in our second chapter North of here, in German Southwest Africa there stands the city of Beersheba, where the citizens believe in the existence of two more Beershebas, one infernal and the other one celestial, though reportedly they have some difficulty in establishing which one is which

It is now time for us to turn our Almanac's attentions to the west of Africa, resuming Wilhelmina Murray's commentary from the point at which we left it in our opening paragraphs, with Murray and her escort Mr. Quatermain arriving in Nouakchott on the coast of Mauritania. "So this is Africa, and not at all what I'd anticipated, at least in so far as the feel of the place is concerned. It's as clean and as open as wind, and has an intangible *bigness* to it that is most like that experienced in certain music. The smells have all the texture and the intricacy of a painting I'm not getting this across at all well, and had best abandon the attempt. After we'd docked and disembarked, Allan procured us cheap hotel accommodation in Nouakchott from which we could carry out all the more local of our explorations, with the first of these being a tour of Mauritania itself. On our first day, out walking in the hot, damp forests near the coast, we stumbled on a most peculiar site, being a long abandoned hut apparently untouched by either local folk or wildlife You will think me mad, but there seemed something strangely English about this abode, with its clay cladding and its window grids of woven branches, its roof thatched after a style that I am sure I've seen in Devon. Inside was a quaint stone fireplace and rudimentary furnishings, and I had quite a nasty turn when I happened upon a baby's crib containing a small skele-

ton, though Allan reassured me that the bones appeared to him to be those of an infant monkey, possibly some unfamiliar species of gorilla. This information, while more comforting than the alternatives, did little to dispel the melancholy strangeness of the place, and we elected to leave everything just as we found it, making our way back through the dark trees where great apes howled somewhere above us.

"In the next few weeks we travelled widely in the nearby regions, and I got the sense that Allan was not here to merely see the sights, but had some other purpose of his own, making enquiries of the local men in languages that he seemed fluent in but which I did not understand. I must admit, I entertained the notion that his old addictions had perhaps resurfaced and that he sought drugs (perhaps the substance called *taduki*, which he often mentions), though this turned out not to be the case

"We journeyed into eastern Mauritania where, we were told, exist two isolated outposts of the Roman Empire, Castra Sanguinarius and Castrum Mare, though we had no luck in finding these and carried on towards Morocco and Algeria. In Morocco we rode through the marvellous oasis of Giphantia, so uniquely fertile that new species will arise, evolve and then become extinct within the space of a few weeks, and past the walled and dead City of Brass, long stripped of all its riches and its bottle-imps, as we made for Tangiers. Here, in a quarter of the city that tourists have named 'the Interwoven Zone,' Allan made his by-now furtive enquiries of a seedy looking chap who had the sweet, medicinal aroma on his dusty clothing that I now associate with opium, and we were led through narrow streets to a stone house with cool, dark rooms where we were introduced to one of the most utterly repellent and unsettling individuals that it has been my misfortune to encounter

"Squatting in a corner swathed in shapeless robes, with only one deformed hand visible, clutching the fuming mouthpiece of a hookah pipe, I would not even swear our host was human. A pretty but subdued young Arab boy lay curled up like a dog upon the rush mat where the creature sat, but had a frightened air to him and did not meet our eyes Our host's voice, issuing from the darkened cave-mouth of his cowl, was guttural yet sounded somehow slippery. We were informed that we were in the presence of a . I believe the word was 'Mudwunk' or 'Mugwump' or something like that. .and that this creature could provide us with whatever drugs or sexual activities we might desire. I was about to leave when Allan asked the monster if we could instead buy information. He desired to know where might be found the kingdom of a woman called Ayesha, the first time (but not the last) I was to hear the name. After a pause, the being shook the cowled, misshapen lump that was its head, and bade us leave. Outside, in some high dudgeon, I demanded Allan make some explanation of his secretive enquiries and a full account of this Ayesha woman that he seemed so willfully intent on finding. Seeming both abashed and hesitant, he told me that he had encountered this Ayesha many years ago, a deathless Queen sustaining herself through the centuries by immersion in a fountain or a 'Fire of Life,' some manner of volcanic phenomenon found in her kingdom, although Allan had no idea where this place might be. He told me that of late he has been feeling old (he is in his mid-seventies), most noticeably upon those occasions when we try to make love, and that his greatest desire was that he should be young again, for me. I was so moved by this, I swore to help him on the instant. Later on, when we made camp upon the desert outskirts of Algeria, fearing that this 'Fire of Life' may prove a disappointment, I endeavoured to convince him, with a demonstration, that he still possessed youth and vitality enough for me, wherein I fancy that I met with some success

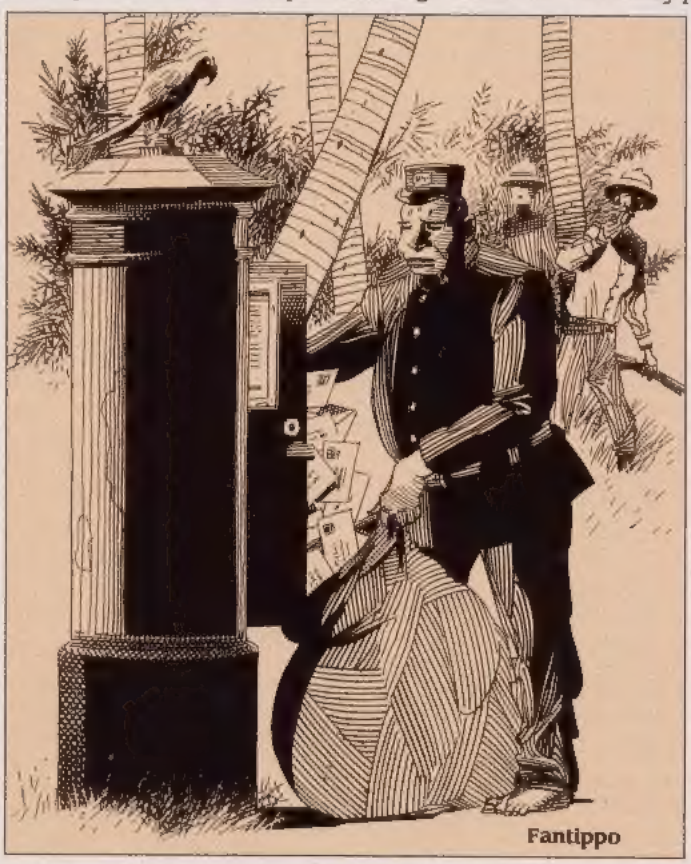
"Algeria was vast and beautiful, with something Biblical about the sky at night, although I don't know what I mean by that, exactly. The northern deserts, stretching east into Tunisia, have such grandeur that I felt alarmed by all the stories in the newspapers that I had read across the years on how the French intended to transform this area, with interlinked canals, to a 'Saharan Sea.' I hope this never comes to pass. Elsewhere within Algeria we passed through a reputed cannibal-and-sorcerer infested region called Crotalophoboi Land, although I am glad to report that we met neither of these dangers, nor did we encounter any locals, so that we could not investigate the rumour that their eyes are set into the bottom of their feet. Travelling further south we saw the prosperous kingdom of Macaria to the west of us and soon passed into Brodie's Land, apparently sometimes referred to as Mlch Country after its inhabitants, the Mlch. Having read the accounts by my great eighteenth century predecessor Lemuel Gulliver of travels into Houyhnhnms Land, it strikes me that the Mlch are similar to the bestial Yahoos that he speaks of, only more peculiar still in that their memory appears to function in reverse, so that they are unable to recall events that took place only moments since, but will have vivid recollections of things that will happen in five minutes time. Leaving the ragged brutes behind us, throwing filth and shrieking in our wake, we headed into the more southern parts of French West Africa.

"Headed for Niamey, we first passed through the outskirts of the city known as Blackland, where surrounding desert has been turned to verdant fields and orchards by the rain-making device of the reputedly insane French scientist Marcel Camaret. Camaret's employer, and the ruler of this territory, is the wanted English murderer and kidnapper named William Ferney, more frequently referred to in the gutter press as 'Harry Killer.' Though I am sure our masters would be pleased were we to capture Mr. Ferney and return with him to England, the unholy reputation of his small militia of armed thugs (known sardonically as Ferney's 'Merry Fellows') led us to accept discretion as the better part of valour, and we kept as far away from Blackland as we could while we rode onto into Uziri Country, where we similarly tried our hardest to avoid the fierce Waziri tribe. The valley country Midian, where the people were converted to fanatically devoted Christians during the first century by Paul of Tarsus, proved as inhospitable, and I confess that I was rather glad as we passed by Niamey into Upper Volta. Here, heading northwest towards the French Sudan, we saw the legendary

minarets of Opar glinting high above that citadel's impregnable and massive walls, which reared like smooth grey cliffs out from a quilt of green.

"In French Sudan we managed to pass through the Valley of the Sepulchre without becoming caught up in a theological dispute between the separate 12th century Crusader colonies of Nimmr, and its sister city at the valley's other end. Investigating rumours of a secret and forbidden city ruled by a fierce warrior queen, we next camped by the great volcano Tuen-Baka, in which we believed this Kingdom (called Ashair by local tribesmen) to be situated. The next morning we saw (from a distance, thankfully) the scuttling forms of a repulsive breed of lizard-men on the volcano's higher slopes, from which Allan concluded that whoever ruled in Ashair could have no connection to his Queen Ayesha, and suggested we move on. The deep, enormous footprint, possibly from some variety of dinosaur, that we discovered not far from the place that we had slept may also have exerted some degree of influence on my companion's eagerness to leave the area. We passed on through the outer reaches of the Great Thorn Forest where we had a startling encounter with the towering tribeswomen of Alali, harsh-eyed goddesses who stand some eight or nine feet tall and who would only speak to or acknowledge me, apparently regarding Allan as beneath contempt. They said that they knew nothing of Ayesha, but advised me to be out of the Thorn Forest before darkness fell, lest I should fall prey to their hated enemies, the tribesmen of nearby Minuni who, the women told me, would kill any giantesses that they came across. When I protested that I was no giantess as they were, they explained that the Minuni, being somewhere between ten and thirteen inches tall, would almost certainly see me as such and set about me anyway. The thought of tiny, armed men quite unnerved me when I read of something similar in Dr. Gulliver's notes from the eighteenth century, and so it was that I required no further urging to move on with Allan towards Dakar on the coast, from whence we thought to make our disappointed way back to our hotel base in Nouakchott."

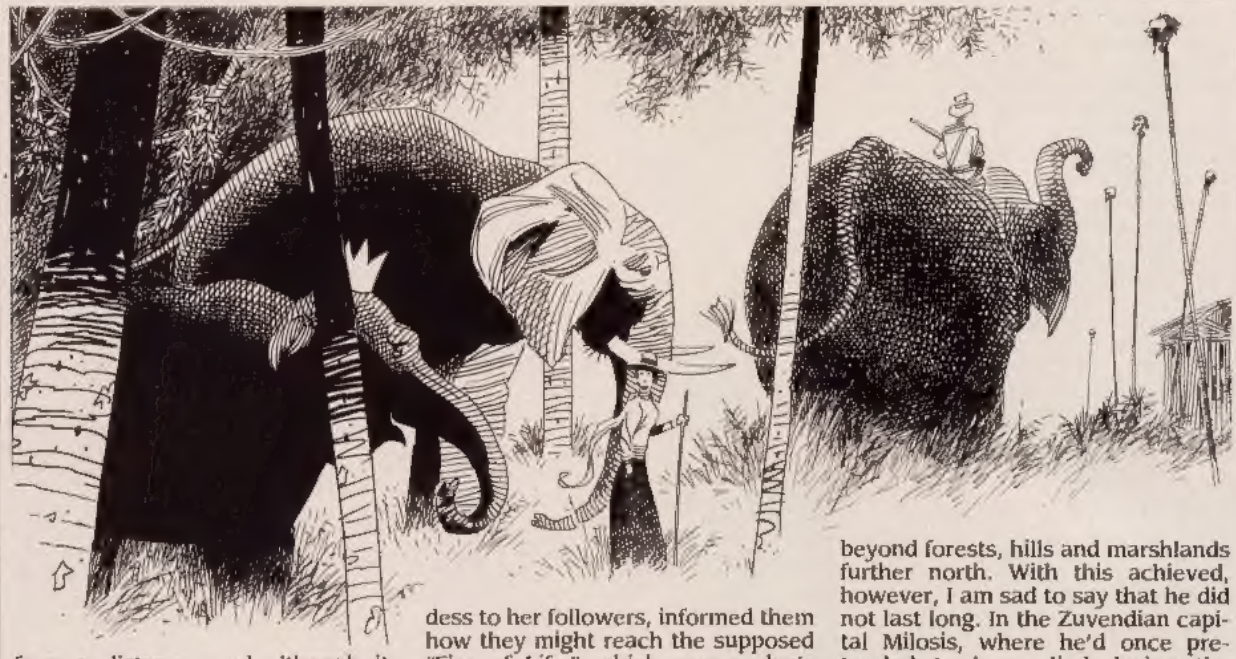
This was not to be, however. Heading north along the coast from Dakar in the final days of 1900, Quatermain and Murray found a coastal kingdom that, despite the many wondrous things they'd seen thus far, still staggered them. "I cannot believe I am not dreaming. Riding into Fantippo, the first thing that I heard besides the distant screeches of macaws and monkeys was the sound of carol-singers, halfway through the final verse of *'Once in Royal David's City.'* They were celebrating Christmas, which I've only just remembered is tomorrow. Then we saw the bright red English pillar-box amongst a clump of palm trees, and our puzzlement became complete. A Negro in an English postman's uniform was emptying the contents of the post-box, envelopes with large and vivid stamps, into his sack. He sweated copiously, the uniform's thick navy-blue material clearly unsuited for the West African sun." Making enquiries, Quatermain and Murray learned that Fantippo's King Koko, much impressed by what he'd heard of England's postal service, had decided he would emulate it back at home. Investigating further, the pair were delighted to discover that the land's Postmaster General owned a detailed map of Africa in which the continent had been divided neatly into postal districts. District EC7, corresponding roughly with the British Protectorate of Uganda, had Ayesha's city, Kor, listed amongst its prominent addresses. Much encouraged by their find, the couple celebrated Christmas in Fantippo, little knowing that it was to be their last together. Setting out once more for the interior in the first weeks of 1901, they headed for Uganda and the City of Ayesha, following which, if we are to believe Miss Murray's uncharacteristically untidy notes upon the subject, the great veteran explorer met with his demise.



Fantippo

On the 8th of January, 1901, they trekked southeast, into Guinea, passing through the jungle region known as the Ape Kingdom by its natives, where the drumming of the simian hominids' famed "Dum-Dum" ceremony echoed on the wind above the forest canopy, and skirted by the secret lake called Junganyika which reputedly contains those waters that are left from Noah's flood. Travelling on through Sierra Leone, they passed the Kingdom of the One-Eyed, where the population will traditionally put out one of their eyes in solidarity with one-eyed monarchs, and went on into Liberia, founded by slaves from America during the early nineteenth century, before progressing to the Cote d'Ivoire. Here they saw the droppings-fouled great wall bounding the city of Xujan, where madmen worship parrots, before journeying on to the Gold Coast and Togo, passing through the Empire known as Ponukele-Drelchkaff (then embroiled in war between King Talou VII and King Yaour IX) upon their way. As they rode through the province of Dahomey to Nigeria, Murray insisted that they pay a visit to the famed Viceroyalty of Ouidah, where she wished to inspect both the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and the famed ancestral home of the Viceroy Francisco Manoel da Silva. Finding both of these locations "dingy, and in need of a good dusting," the pair journeyed on into Nigeria itself.

"Nigeria seems profoundly strange," observed Miss Murray in her journal, "or at least if we are to believe the stories told us by our guides and bearers. In the north, they say, is Sleepless City, where the natives never sleep themselves and thus will bury sleeping travellers, believing them to be deceased. If this happens to you, or indeed should you endure any variety of death, disfigurement or maiming, your companions would do well, apparently, to carry your remains to Fixit City on Nigeria's Bauchi Plateau, where the natives seemingly are able to mend anyone from nothing more than bones or hanks of hair. Dead's Town, deep in the Nigerian bush and dwelled in by the lately dead, sounded somewhere to be avoided, as did the cruel and insanely capricious more northerly town, Unreturnable-Heaven. We saw swamp-bound Wraith-Island



from a distance, and although its beautiful inhabitants are said to be the most hospitable of people, we thought we detected several monstrous forms wallowing in the shallows off its coast and so passed on through Cameroon towards the Congo. On our way we had the most delightful treat of falling in amongst a herd of the most civilised and gentle elephants that I have ever seen, one of whom I thought I saw wearing a small golden crown atop his head, although Allan insists that I must be mistaken. The charm of this encounter lasted until we passed by the horrid little hut, deep in the Congo and still ringed by decomposing heads on poles, where ivory-trader's agent Kurtz met his deserved demise, recounted in the papers published by a Mr. Marlow just a year or two ago. We hurried on through Belgian Congo, and into Uganda, where we saw the mountain-ringed plateau whereon lies Kor rise up from the surrounding landscape like some dreadful fortress from the Middle Ages."

It is here that Mina Murray's journal starts to become messy and erratic, though this is forgivable when we consider the tremendous upsets that she must have been enduring. She describes with great lucidity how she and Quatermain, bearers now fled, made their way through the mountains down the bed of a dried prehistoric canal, where they saw members of the Amahagger tribe, dressed in their antelope and leopard skins, dancing about fires made from burning mummies looted from the catacombs beneath the mountains. She tells how they eventually reached Kor itself, which they discovered to be now ruled by a native Amahagger woman posing as Ayesha (whom, they learned, was now believed to have been reincarnated somewhere off in Asia). This quite ordinary mortal woman, fearful that the duo would expose her as less than a goddess to her followers, informed them how they might reach the supposed "Fire of Life," which was a day's march east, within a meteoric crater. Murray next recounts the couple's journey to this place and their discovery of the strange and luminescent pool that spat and bubbled at the crater's centre.

"It was utterly unearthly, filled with neither fire nor liquid but a strange blue energy that glowed like flame but spurted up and fell in globules more like water. All around the edges of the pool a great variety of names had been patiently carved by idle hands into the ancient rock. We saw the name 'Orlando' and a word that I thought might have been the ancient Greek for 'Homer.' We undressed, me taking off even my scarf, and I elected to go first into the pool, which, neither hot nor cool, had the most eerie tingling sensation that accompanied its luminous cascade. I climbed out of its further side as Allan started to climb in behind me, and beheld myself in disappointment. I'd not changed at all. These hateful scars were still about my throat, and all my body was the same. I next heard Allan make a cry behind me, and..." At this point, Mina Murray's description becomes mostly unreadable. The next five pages following the above entry have all been crossed out so heavily as to be quite beyond recovery, and when the narrative resumes the pair have left Uganda and are in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, headed north with Quatermain seemingly in ill health.

"Following our dreadful disappointment in Ayesha's kingdom when we learned the so-called Fire of Life had ***no effect whatsoever,*** Allan seemed to lose the will to live. We traveled north through Blemmyae Country, where we saw the preserved body of one of the region's earliest inhabitants, whose face was in his chest and had no head. Allan was so ill I feared he would not last until we reached his much-beloved lost land of Zuvendis, beyond forests, hills and marshlands further north. With this achieved, however, I am sad to say that he did not last long. In the Zuvendian capital Milosis, where he'd once pretended to have died during the 1880s, Allan Quatermain expired and was interred next to the graves made for his friends Sir Henry Curtis and the giant Umslopogaas. Obviously, I was dreadfully upset. All is not doom and gloom however, for just prior to Allan's death we found out that a son of his he'd thought long dead (also called Allan) was in fact alive and living in Milosis.

"This younger Allan is one of the most attractive, firm-muscled young men I have ever had the fortune to encounter, and it would be fair to say that an attraction has been evident between us since the start of our acquaintance. We resolved that he should leave Zuvendis and that we should travel on together as companions, possibly paying a visit to the ruined city off in Abyssinia that we found a stone-etched map of by the crater-pool in Kor. I am certain it is what his father would have wished."

The callous and dismissive tone with which Miss Murray hurries through her sparse description of her lover's death, along with the indecent haste she shows in forming a romantic bond with Quatermain's young son have both contributed (along with her divorcee status) to an appraisal of Miss Murray as "promiscuous" in the personal files maintained by her superiors at Military Intelligence. These files also express great disappointment that the "Fire of Life," the source of immortality and endless youth (of some interest to England's ruling class), should have turned out to be a myth, and recommend that Murray's travels be curtailed in future. This did not prevent her and the younger Allan Quatermain, however, from embarking on a trip to China during late 1906, as we shall learn during our Almanac's next fascinating chapter, when we focus our attention upon Asia and the far Australias.

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